

Beyond the Library Collections

Proceedings of the 2022 Erasmus Staff Training Week at ULiège Library

François Renaville and Fabienne Prosmans (Eds.)

ULIÈGE LIBRARY
LIÈGE





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Contents

Preface	xi
<i>Tina Baich</i>	
Introduction	1
<i>François Renaville and Fabienne Prosmans</i>	
<u>Part I. Collaboration for shared collections and preservation</u>	
Collection management collaborations in Sweden	7
<i>Karin Byström</i>	
Access to academic heritage: ENC theses available online	19
<i>Camille Carette</i>	
When David and Goliath work together: The impact of a cooperation agreement on library strategy	27
<i>Susanne Kirchmair</i>	
How the interlibrary loan service can collaborate with other libraries and university services	39
<i>Isàvena Opisso</i>	
<u>Part II. DDA and EBA as opportunities</u>	
Purchase on demand via interlibrary loan: Analysis of the first four years at University of Antwerp Library	49
<i>Jennifer Van den Avijle and Luca Maggiore</i>	
Patron-Driven Acquisition et Evidence-Based Acquisition : Comment implémenter ces modèles afin d'étendre l'offre documentaire dans une bibliothèque ?	63
<i>Marion Favre and Manon Velasco</i>	

Part III. Interlibrary loan workflows and experiences

- How library systems influence the interlibrary loan workflow: A comparison between Alma and Koha 91
Martina Kassler and Veronica Fors
- International loans in the Main Library of AGH UST: The technical library as a witness of change 109
Karolina Forma
- The gentle art of giving and receiving: Resource sharing services in a museum library 119
Florian Preiß
- Four years of ILL service at the Faculty Library of Arts and Philosophy (Ghent University): Findings and challenges 129
Joris Baeyens
- Changing tools, changing habits, changing workflows: Recent evolutions of the interlibrary loan service at ULiège Library 139
Fabienne Prosmans and François Renaville

Part IV. Enhanced ILL services through collaborations and networks

- From fee to free: How to reduce expenses by eliminating revenue 163
Léa Bouillet
- HERMES, an international project on free digital resource sharing 173
Carmen Lomba; Stefania Marzocchi; and Debora Mazza
- The NILDE network and document delivery in Verona University Libraries 187
Elisabetta Guerra

Part V. Impact of Covid-19 on library accessibility and services

- COVID-19. New challenges and new solutions at the University of Warsaw Library 201
Franciszek Skalski

How COVID has changed our world. New opportunities for the future? A case study for UPM Libraries <i>Reyes Albo</i>	217
Book Contributors	227
Acknowledgements	235

How library systems influence the interlibrary loan workflow: A comparison between Alma and Koha

Martina Kassler and Veronica Fors

Abstract

The interlibrary loan (ILL) workflow is influenced by several outside and inside factors, which can variously affect its efficacy in providing items to library users. This paper will show differences and similarities in the ILL workflow, from customer order to delivery or return of the item, when using two different library systems. The ILL workflow includes both internal and external document supply because the libraries offer and provide services both to their own users and to other libraries. Some supplied items are returnable (for example books) and others are non-returnable (for example copies of articles). This workflow chain involves a series of steps and starts with a request made by a user. This is followed by the entry of necessary data into both the receiving and lending libraries' ILL systems to administrate the request and continues with the delivery to the end user. For returnable items, the final step is returning them to the provider. This paper will compare how two Swedish libraries (Örebro University Library and Karlstad University Library) established their ILL workflows and how decisions made in the ILL process are based on the different library systems used (Alma and Koha). It concludes with a discussion of what can be learned from the comparison, the benefits and challenges presented by each system and any improvements that can be made.

Keywords

Interlibrary loan; ILL; Workflow; Library system; University library; Alma; Koha

Article

Introduction

Libraries' limited finances and resources mean that their collections cannot contain all the material that their users request. ILLs are therefore an important part of a library's information supply.

The concept of ILL existed as far back as the 8th century in Western Europe. During the Middle Ages, borrowing and lending occurred between monasteries and later, during the Renaissance, libraries in Italy, France and England flourished and an informal practice of ILL was used by the scholars of the time. Since then, the extent of ILL has varied between times and places. In the first half of the 20th century, the international inter-lending practice increased which led to the creation of the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA). This organization established international rules and guidelines for lending which made international borrowing and lending more formalized and efficient. Today's librarians and library patrons see ILL as a viable, economical and natural option ([Miguel, 2007](#)).

There are several different aspects that have affected the current ILL workflow. The workflow should both facilitate good service for the library's patrons and be efficient for the staff working with ILL. Other elements such as economical and technical factors have, however, also had to be taken into consideration when trying to streamline the workflow.

Both Örebro University Library and Karlstad University Library have relatively recently implemented new library systems. Örebro acquired the proprietary system Alma, which is provided via subscription from Ex Libris, in 2017. Karlstad, on the other hand, acquired Koha, which is an open-source system, in 2020. It is therefore interesting to investigate whether and how the workflow for ILL management is affected by working in two different systems that are also provided through different business models.

The ILL process at the two libraries consists of management of ILL for the library's patrons (ILL borrowing) and management of loans to other libraries (ILL lending). In this paper we focus on the management of the ILL borrowing process.

For books, the main source for both borrowing and lending is LIBRIS Fjärrlån, the ILL module in the Swedish union catalogue LIBRIS. Most journal articles ordered for library patrons are ordered via LIBRIS and the vendor Subito. Articles sent to other libraries are mainly ordered by other Swedish libraries via LIBRIS.

The paper starts with background information about the two library systems Alma and Koha and the implementation process at the libraries. There is also a description of their current ILL workflows and then a comparison of the systems and workflows. This is followed by a section describing the workflow adjustments which have been made depend-

ing on the systems' features. Finally, the discussion looks ahead to the improvements which can be made to increase the efficacy of the workflows and contribute to developing in services for the library patrons.

Örebro University and Örebro University Library

Örebro University is a comprehensive university with programs, courses, and research distributed across three faculties, eight schools, 85 degree programs and 920 single courses. The university has about 16,000 students, 1,700 members of staff and 490 doctoral students. The university is located in the city of Örebro in the middle of Sweden with two campus areas in Örebro and another in Grythyttan situated one hour north of Örebro. One of the campuses in Örebro constitutes the main campus area where most of the faculty and administration can be found while the other one is located at the University Hospital.

The University Library consists of three staffed physical libraries, one at each campus area, and one unstaffed Sheet Music Library, also located at the main campus. The Medical Library located at the University Hospital campus does not only serve the university, but also provides library services, including ILLs, for medical staff in the region ([Örebro University, 2021](#)).

In 2020, the library's collections consisted of 247,770 printed books, 232,061 electronic books, 215 print journals and 14,500 electronic journals; 773 study places are provided and there are around 350,000 visitors a year (based on a 5-year period before the pandemic) ([National Library of Sweden, 2021](#)).

The Library has a staff of 38. Five staff members at the main library work part-time with ILL (equal to two full-time positions), one staff member at the Medical Library also works part-time with their ILLs, as does one staff member at the library located in Grythyttan.

In 2020, the library borrowed 553 physical materials (mostly books) from other libraries and lent 2,996 materials to other libraries. During the same period, 361 non-returnable materials (mostly journal articles) were ordered from other libraries (and vendors) and 153 non-returnable materials were sent to other libraries.

The Alma library system

Alma was first released 2012 and is a cloud-based library system maintained and developed by Ex Libris, a Clarivate company, based in Israel. Ex Libris is one of the largest companies in the library technology sector. They have specialized in products for acade-

mic, research, national libraries, and consortia, and Alma was created to meet the needs of those libraries ([Breeding, 2015b](#)).

Alma is a unified next generation system which integrates disparate features for managing print, electronic and digital resources. The system includes the whole suite of library operations such as selection, acquisition, print management, electronic management, metadata management, link resolution, digitization, user management, fulfillment, and discovery. The sharing of data and collaborating of services facilitate more efficient workflows ([Branch, 2014](#)).

Ex Libris provides Alma as a proprietary system which customers can access through subscription. Like many of the other next generation systems, Alma is provided by a multi-tenant/cloud solution. Every customer accesses the same cloud-based version of the software by the SaaS (Software as a Service) method instead of installing it. The vendor is responsible for hosting and supporting the system. Each library can have customized features, but the underlying code is the same for everyone. When the software updates all the customers get it at the same time ([Machovec, 2014](#)).

The staff at a library using Alma does not have access to the entire system, instead each staff-member is assigned various so-called roles that give them access to different sections of the system where they can perform their tasks. These sections consist of in-built workflows in the system ([Ex Libris, n.d.-b](#)). For example, if you work with ILLs you are assigned the role Fulfillment Services Manager and are then given access to the workflow for Resource Sharing.

Alma is a widely used library system. In 2021, it was used at libraries in 41 countries ([Breeding, 2021](#)). In Sweden it is used at about 20 libraries, including Umeå University Library, the Royal Institute of Technology, Mälardalen University and the Swedish Film Institute Library.

From Voyager to Alma at Örebro University Library

Before acquiring Alma, Örebro University Library used the Voyager ILS (also from Ex Libris), but had a separate ILL system. SAGA, the ILL system used until the end of 2013, was a system developed at the Karolinska Institute University Library and was used by several Swedish university libraries.

Both Voyager and SAGA had been acquired as part of a consortium called GSLG. The consortium consists of Örebro University Library, Linnaeus University Library and Borås University Library. At the end of 2013, SAGA was discontinued and the solution for the GSLG consortia was to develop a new ILL system in-house. The new system was called GSLG ILL or simply GILL and developed at Borås University. However, it had already been decided that the system to replace SAGA would only be a temporary solution since the procurement of a new library system was planned for the near future.

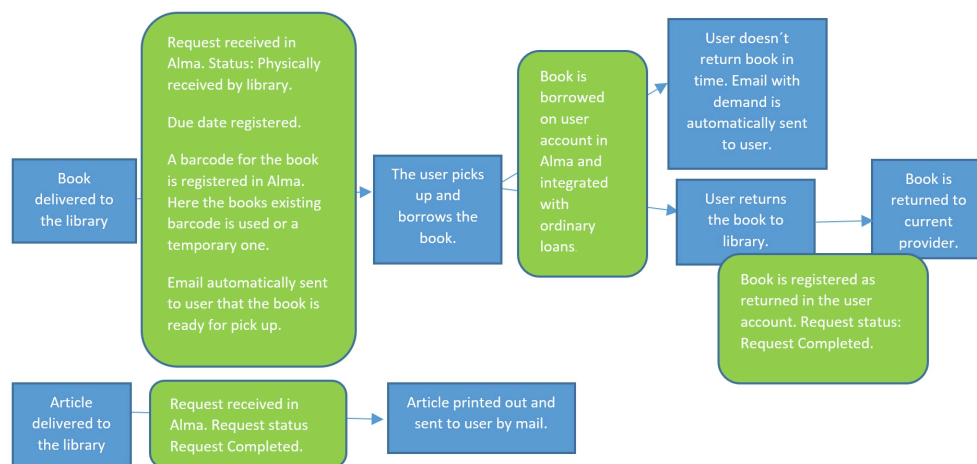
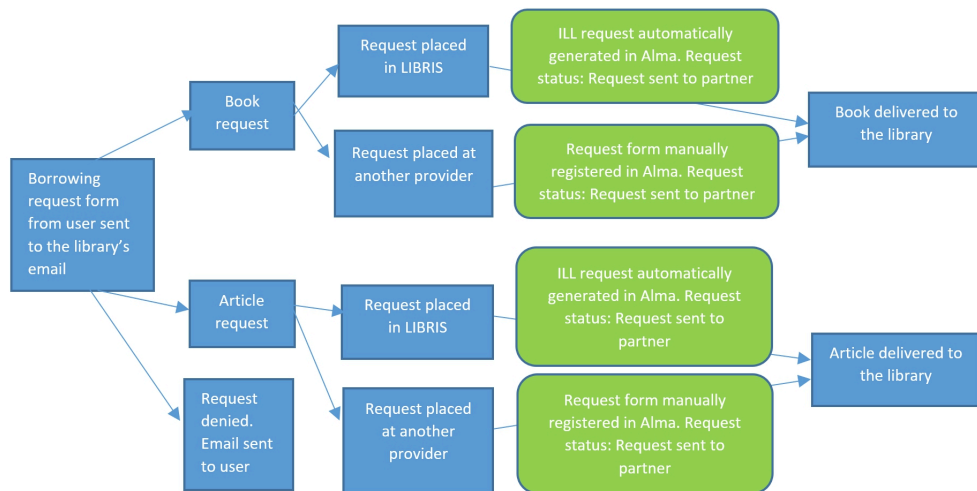
In 2014, an inventory was made where each library in the consortium produced a decision document that described the systems that the individual libraries had and what needs were judged to exist in the future. During 2016-2017, Örebro and the members of the consortium then decided to purchase and implement a new ILS-system instead of Voyager. There were several reasons for changing the system: the development and new features for Voyager had started to decline, the system was hosted locally on a consortium-owned server at Örebro University and the server was approaching its end-of-life, and Voyager also lacked any real support for e-resource management (Johansson & Wiman, internal document, 2014 and Nordström, personal communication, 2021).

The new library system was acquired through a public tender where an added value model, taking both price and quality into consideration, was used for evaluating the offers that were received. Within the consortium it was also considered that an important feature when procuring a new system or suite of systems was that all functionalities should be covered, including the acquisition, description, management, searching and circulation of physical and electronic resources, with integrated workflows for all resources. Support for the entire lifecycle of library resources was also required. The new system was not only to replace the current ILS, but also the discovery service, knowledge base and Link Resolver. The new system should also include Electronic Resource Management System (ERMS) functionality and eliminate the need to enter duplicate information into multiple, stand-alone systems.

Even if ILL management was not the main focus in the procurement there were some requirements, like integration with LIBRIS Fjärrlån. Integration of the ILL workflow into the main library system was also considered an improvement. ILLs were almost not managed at all in Voyager – any system use for this was limited to lending material to other libraries. The ILLs from other libraries for the library's users were managed in systems that were separate from Voyager, as mentioned above. In order to display the ILLs among other loans to the library patrons, an in-house developed OPAC was needed. Using a unified system would eliminate the need to invest library resources in in-house solutions.

The consortium finally decided to accept the tender from Ex Libris which received the lowest total cost, calculated using the added value model, with the Alma/Primo system suite, where Primo is the Discovery interface. Alma/Primo then went live at Örebro University Library in 2017 (Nordström, personal communication, 2021).

ILL workflow at Örebro University Library



Figures 1a and 1b: ILL workflow at Örebro University Library

The ILL process at Örebro University Library starts with an ILL request from a library user on the library's website. There is one request form for books and another for articles/chapters. The ILL form is automatically sent to a functional email for ILL at the library. The ILL staff checks the email and verifies whether the request is for an item in the library's own collections. If this is the case, the request is denied. An email is sent to the user with information that the book is available at the library or that the book can be reserved. If the book or article is not available at the library, a search for suitable providers is performed.

There is no charge for staff and students at Örebro University to make ILL requests for books which can be ordered from the Nordic countries. For ILL requests for books from other countries, a fee of 175 SEK (1 SEK is approximately 0,09 EUR) per book is charged for both staff and students. Requests for articles through ILL are free of charge for staff and for the moment also for students. There are no fees for the staff at Region Örebro County (which is a user group at the Medical Library, which is part of Örebro University Library) because of an agreement with Region Örebro County.

The ILL staff normally makes ILL book requests from LIBRIS Fjärrlån, the Swedish union catalogue. If the request cannot be made in LIBRIS, attempts are made to order from other providers, such as libraries in other Nordic countries, Subito or OCLC. Article requests are normally made from Subito. If they are not available for delivery, attempts are made with other providers, such as LIBRIS, then Nordic Countries Libraries, OCLC, Get it Now or Reprints Desk.

Requests made in LIBRIS are imported once a day using an integration profile in Alma (the integration profile uses LIBRIS's API). The import only takes place once a day due to a limitation in Alma. It is only possible to make four imports at fixed times daily and because Örebro University Library consists of four separate libraries, one import time slot is used for each library.

If the request is made elsewhere, it is added manually in Alma. Manual registration is helped by an in-house plug-in where the DOI and PMID number can be entered and then the bibliographical records are registered automatically in Alma (the same functionality is now built into Alma but the plug-in is still used since it provides some extra flexibility). Records about the user, owning library and patron (provider) are also added and the status of the request is marked as *Request sent to partner*. Both the staff at the library and the user who has requested the item can see the request status: the staff in Alma and the user via My Account in Primo.

The chosen providers then, in turn, receive the request and decide if they can fulfill it. If they cannot, the ILL staff mark the status of the record in Alma as *Cannot be fulfilled* and the record is then removed in the system. A search for other possible providers is made. If no provider is found, the user is notified that the request is denied.

If the provider can fulfill the request, the book or article is delivered to the library. When the item arrives, the ILL staff register it in Alma as *Received*. If the ILL is a book, a temporary record is created. A lending period is registered on the record, a temporary barcode is assigned to the item (here the existing barcode on the book is used or, if there is no existing barcode, a barcode is added on the ILL-slip which comes with the slip from the library) and an email is automatically sent to the user notifying them that the item is ready for pick up. The status now becomes *Physically received by library*. The item is placed on the library's hold shelf at the information desk, ready for the user to pick up. If the received request is a non-returnable, such as an article, it is printed out and sent to the user. The status is then marked as *Request complete*.

When the user picks up the item at the information desk the temporary barcode on the item is scanned in and registered in Alma and the status is now *Loaned item to patron*. The loan is considered a standard loan in the system and integrated with a user's other loans on their account. When the loan is due, a due date notice is automatically sent to the user by Alma.

Finally, the user returns the loan to the library's information desk and its status is marked as *Request complete* and returned to the current provider. If the book is lost or not returned at all a fee of 500 SEK is placed on the user's account.

Karlstad University and Karlstad University Library

The 2021 statistics show that Karlstad University offers teaching in about 75 programs, 750 courses and in over 50 subjects. There are about 19,000 undergraduate students, about 265 PhD students and the staff number is 1,334 ([Karlstad University, 2021](#)).

The university has two campuses, one in Karlstad and another in Arvika, where the Ingesund School of Music trains music teachers, musicians and music producers.

In 2021, Karlstad University Library's collection consisted of 139,099 printed books, 397,776 electronic books, 195 print journals and 13,607 electronic journals. The library has 1,488 study places and around 187,745 visitors a year. In 2021 Karlstad University Library's ILL department lent 2,279 books and articles and borrowed 1,088 ([Karlstad University, 2021](#)). Three staff members work with ILL part time, the equivalent of one full-time position.

The Koha library system

Koha is an open-source system. This library system is used worldwide by all kinds of different libraries like public libraries, university libraries, private libraries, school libraries, research libraries and more.

Koha is based on an SQL database, and is web based and therefore very flexible and can be adapted to different needs, as testified to on the website of the Koha library software community.¹ Koha is a Maori word that means "present" as a hint that joining Koha is free of charge. The library system was invented in 1999 in New Zealand.

There is a Swedish Koha user group² networking to help each other to develop the sys-

1. <https://koha-community.org/about>

2. <https://koha.se>

tem. They provide information on their website about news, discussions, a wiki and the announcements of meetings for exchanges and discussions.

Some of the university and college libraries working with the Koha system in Sweden are: Stockholm University Library, Mid Sweden University Library, Luleå University Library, Lund University Library, Gothenburg University Library, and the libraries of the following colleges: Kristianstad University, Blekinge Institute of Technology, Dalarna University, and the University of Gävle. And last, but not least Karlstad University Library, which changed from the Sierra library system to Koha in January 2021.

From Sierra to Koha at Karlstad University Library

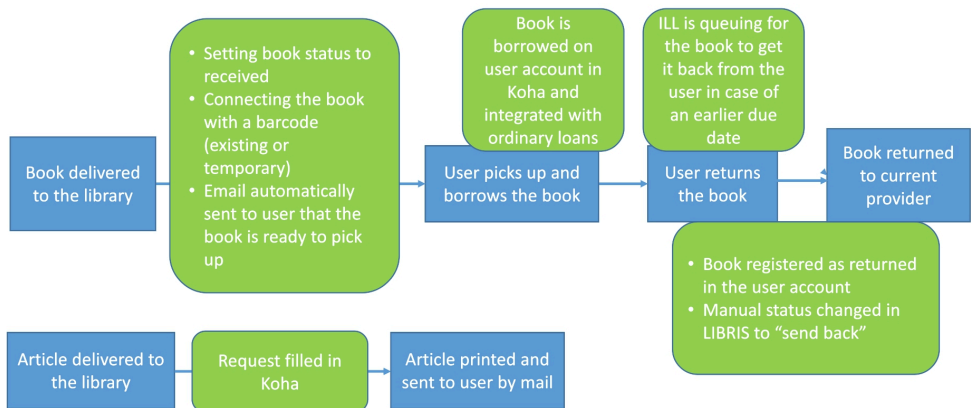
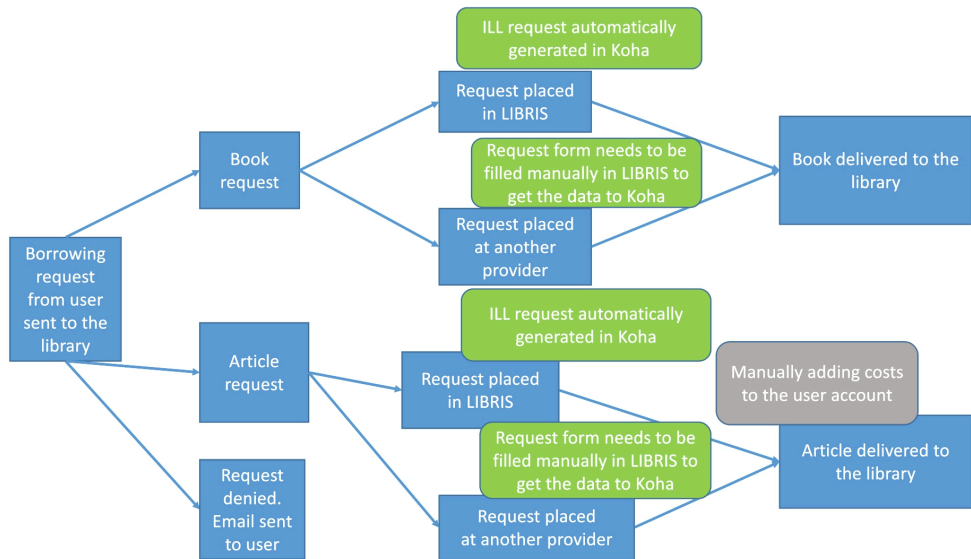
From the early 2000s, Karlstad University Library had the integrated library system Millennium owned by the American company Innovative. The system later changed name from Millennium to Sierra. Karlstad University Library's contract was about to expire in 2020 and the management decided to have a closer look at all possible alternatives. During 2019, pre-studies were carried out by a university project manager through interviews with the employees working the most with the system. The options were to continue with Sierra, change to the Alma library system, or start with the open-source system Koha. Considerations involved not only the costs but also how well the system could communicate with other systems, which is relevant for the work at the library and how it could contribute to making day-today work as smooth as possible.

The decision was in Koha's favor because it seemed to be the most effective system for the work at the library and in the long run it would also be the cheapest alternative. A big advantage is that Karlstad University Library would be able to influence and make changes which are perfectly suited to the library's way of working and collaborate with other Swedish libraries to develop the system. In December 2020, Karlstad University Library went live with Koha according to Nilsson (internal document, 2019).

Sierra was not the best tool for ILL, and the process involved finding ways inside the system to make sure that loans were booked and the stage of their delivery process visible. One advantage was that a webform to order ILL was automatically integrated into the system. The biggest disadvantage was that Sierra and the Swedish national ILL system LIBRIS Fjärrlån were not connected to each other.

The Swedish Koha group had, together with a consultant, already done work on developing the ILL module before Karlstad's University Library joined Koha.

ILL workflow at Karlstad University Library



Figures 2a and 2b: ILL workflow at Karlstad University Library

The ILL staff looks up the references sent by the user. A first manual check is done to determine if the book or article is owned by the library or if the article can be reached via open access. In these cases, the user is informed on how to access the material and the ordering process is stopped. When the book or article is not available, the Swedish ILL system LIBRIS Fjärrlån is checked to see if it is possible to place an order with a Swedish library. If this is the case, the order for the book or article is placed through

LIBRIS because the Koha library system is connected to LIBRIS and all orders made in LIBRIS are automatically implemented into Koha with an update every 15 minutes.

If it is not possible to order through LIBRIS other providers are checked. For books, it is the Nordic libraries first and then Subito and OCLC. For articles, Subito, Get it now, Nordic libraries and OCLC are checked in this order.

If the order is sent to providers other than LIBRIS, the ILL staff must place a manual order in LIBRIS through a so-called “empty form” order to import the data into the Koha library system.

Ordering books through ILL from Nordic countries is free of charge at Karlstad University Library. Books ordered from outside the Nordic countries cost 200 SEK and articles 50 SEK each. Those fees must be added manually to the user’s account in Koha if it is a student or other user. For university staff, costs are charged to the faculties once a year.

As soon as the ordered material is delivered, the status is set to *Received* in Koha. If it is an article, the printed version is sent to the user by post and the order is fulfilled. If it is a book, it is set as *Received* in Koha, the returning dates (guaranteed time and possible duration of loan) are filled in and a barcode is associated to the book so that the user is able to borrow it at the self-service machines. An email is sent automatically to the user notifying them that the book is now ready for pick up from the reserved books shelf. As soon as the user borrows the book at the library, it is added to the user’s account and can be kept until an email is sent informing the user to return the book. This will usually happen at the end of the longest possible borrowing period. If the book needs to be returned earlier because the lending library claims it back, the book is reserved for the interlibrary loan department in Koha. That generates an email to the user to return the book. As Karlstad University Library has 14 days as an automatic re-borrowing period, the return date is set to the end of that ongoing period. As soon as the user returns the book, it is removed from their account. The ILL staff will change the status in LIBRIS Fjär-rån to *Returned* and will send the book back by post.

Alma-Koha Comparison

Both Örebro and Karlstad University Libraries stated that the cost was an important issue in the procurement, and both claimed that they accepted the tender that was the most economically advantageous given the current requirements. The different models have different costs at different times in the operation process. For an open-source system, like Koha, the software is free, but services such as system implementation, data migration, training materials, onsite training, server and ongoing maintenance, come at a fee ([Jost, 2016](#)). For a proprietary system like Alma, on the other hand, the library pays

more for the software subscription, but saves on service fees which are included in the subscription ([Ex Libris, n.d.-a](#)).

Subscribing to a proprietary system means that the library itself does not have to manage system development because this is managed by the company which provides the system. If a library subscribes to Alma, for example, it can use the system and automatically receives updated versions of it through the Ex Libris cloud solution. Support is also provided by the company. This saves time and resources which suited Örebro University Library. A disadvantage is that the library cannot influence the system to any great extent and must instead adapt its workflows to the system. The library is dependent on the vendor for updates of the system and its functions, solutions to any systemic problems and service enhancements ([Breeding, 2017](#)).

With an open source-system, the library has an opportunity to cooperate with other Koha users and to influence the system. Karlstad University considered this an advantage in their procurement. The system can to some extent be adapted to the needs of the library. However, potential problems may occur if the situation arises that not everyone is willing to share their source code at all or to the same extent ([Askey, 2008](#)). Cooperation may then be tilted. Another disadvantage is, as stated, that the library does not have access to the technical support that a providing company can offer ([Helling, 2010](#)). Here the challenges are a question of resources and the need for relevant skills and competence ([Thacker & Knutson, 2015](#)). These skills and competence can come from in-house staff or a consultant.

An overall comparison of Örebro and Karlstad's University Libraries' experiences of Alma and Koha seems to indicate few differences in functionality and usability between the systems. The libraries both have a total solution, and ILL functionality is integrated in their systems which makes work easier and more effective both for the staff and users. Previous investigations of the degree to which open-source systems have the same functionality as proprietary systems have shown that they are roughly equivalent. Koha, in particular, seems to be the equal of any proprietary system in terms of functionality ([Breeding, 2015a](#); [Pruett & Choi, 2013](#)). In the past, Koha lacked a module for ILL ([Pruett & Choi, 2013](#)), but now the Koha network has integrated one. It appears that some functions were not as well developed in Koha as in Alma, for example manual registration of records in the system (see below).

There follows a more detailed comparison between the libraries' workflows which shows the similarities and differences in functionality.

At the beginning of the ILL process, users at Örebro University Library complete one of two separate web-based forms (one for books and one for articles/chapters) generating an email to the ILL administration. It should be noted that Primo has the functionality to include an ILL request form which is, when it is completed, automatically imported into Alma. The library has not yet started to use this functionality, but there are discussions about doing so. Karlstad University Library does not currently have any web-based

forms and instead users contact the administration by email. Koha has a function for integrating an acquisition form in the system. Recently this and other possibilities for ILL acquisition forms have been investigated to decide how to proceed. A similar process to the current one of checking if the ILL requests should be actual requests with regard to the current terms will then be implemented.

If the request proceeds, both libraries use LIBRIS to investigate whether requests for books are available at Swedish Libraries. As both Alma and Koha are integrated with LIBRIS, they both import records to their systems when the requests are made. Karlstad seems to receive imports more frequently than Örebro: Koha is updated every 15 minutes (this can be adjusted to any suitable interval) and Örebro University Library can get one import of records per day to Alma due to a limitation in the system which permits a limited number of imports per day for system users.

Regarding requests to other suppliers, such as Subito, Get it Now, Reprints Desk and OCLC, the systems differ in terms of functionality for manual registration of records. In Alma it is possible to register a record manually directly within the system. In Koha, on the other hand, this is not possible. Instead, the staff at Karlstad University Library places a manual request in LIBRIS through the so-called *empty form* and the record's data are then imported to Koha.

When the book arrives to the libraries, the circulation-process can be managed in one system for both Alma and Koha. The request status changes when different steps are taken in the workflow. The books are received, lent, and returned in the system. It is searchable and both library staff and users can see the status of the request. The request is registered on the user's account with their ordinary loans, which makes it possible to get an overview of all the user's loan types.

Communication with users takes place through the systems. Emails are sent automatically by the systems when, for example, the book is ready for pick up, is delayed or must be returned. When the book is delayed, Karlstad University Library must place a reservation for the ILL department to be able to stop the automatic renewal.

Adjustments in the ILL workflow connected to the ILL systems limits

The choice of provider is very closely connected to the ILL system. As all orders set in LIBRIS are automatically implemented into Alma and Koha, it is the libraries' first choice for books and at Karlstad University Library also for articles. With regard to books, it is very clear that they should be ordered within Sweden if possible. For articles, there are several factors in play.

At Karlstad University Library, articles are ordered in LIBRIS as much as possible as the workflow is the easiest and most time efficient. The normal range of costs for an article

is 80 to 100 SEK in these cases. Delivery time can range from a few hours to a few days. If an article request is very urgent, it is ordered from document delivery services like Subito or Get it Now. This is also done if the article is unavailable through LIBRIS. In such cases orders are made from the providers' websites and additionally a proforma order is placed in LIBRIS to import the request into Koha. The pricing can differ much more in these cases, ranging from six to 54 EUR per article for Subito and 24 EUR for Get it now. In these cases, the availability, pricing, and delivery format are taken into consideration. Get it Now delivers via email directly to the user, while Subito delivers to the library in digital form via email. The article then must be printed and sent to the user as a paper copy.

At Örebro University Library most articles are ordered from Subito. This provider is considered to have relatively low prices and delivers the articles quickly (see above). Even if the records are not imported directly to Alma like the records from LIBRIS, it is possible to register requests manually in Alma and this is facilitated with the in-house plug-in which imports bibliographical data to the record if there is a DOI or PMID number. As a second alternative, articles are ordered from LIBRIS. Although the price is in the normal range, as mentioned above, delivery time can vary, often taking longer than articles from Subito.

Discussion and future work

One of the challenges regarding the ILL workflow is to get the requests into the system and make the workflow as effective as possible. At Örebro University Library, the request from library patrons is first placed through web-based forms and then comes to the library's ILL email. Then it must be registered in Alma, either via import or manually. The process of activating the ILL form function available in Primo is ongoing. Through this, ILL requests with their bibliographical data would come directly into Alma which will streamline the workflow. Far fewer records will then have to be created manually in the system. An additional advantage is that the request will be visible directly at the user's Alma account. Currently, users may be uncertain whether their orders have been processed because there is a delay between the request being made and its registration in Alma.

The Koha development group for ILL has the option to import data from Subito directly on their list of future developments. Several libraries are using this document delivery provider and face the same problem. If data can be directly imported from Subito to Koha, the ILL workflow will probably change with Subito again being Karlstad University Library's first choice for ordering articles. Once Subito is connected to Koha maybe other providers can be connected as well.

RapidILL is another alternative to LIBRIS that is directly connected to Alma for sourcing articles. Alma and RapidILL are both Ex Libris products. The system is more fixed to the company's solutions, but the solutions provided are easy to implement and use.

RapidILL also has an automated design for ILLs, making it possible to obtain the loans and non-returns fast and at a low cost. It therefore seems like a solution that would make the entire ILL workflow more efficient. However, no Swedish libraries appear to have started using RapidILL permanently and Örebro University Library is also still waiting with implementation. However, it should be interesting to follow developments and see if it could be something for Örebro University Library in the future.

Another area under development is the billing of articles. At the moment, Karlstad University Library charges a fee per article on student accounts. The faculties pay for articles requested by Karlstad University employees, which means that the ILL department manually registers, outside the library system, how many articles per faculty are ordered. At the end of the year internal bills are sent to the faculties. The future goal is to automatically generate the fee on the students account as soon as an article is ordered. At present there is an in-between solution where the fees are prefilled beside the order number and can be connected to the account with one click. For the employees, it should be possible to create accounts for the faculties or to have a statistics part in which orders can be counted by faculty. That would make the work easier as all the information would be registered in one system.

Another area of future development are claims. At the moment books need to be reserved for the ILL department as soon as they are claimed by the lending library. As Karlstad University Library has automatic renewals of 14 days, in the worst case scenario 14 days are needed to get the book back, and there are better solutions already in progress to claim ILLs immediately.

There are also features in Alma which can facilitate billing. But because almost all ILL requests are free of charge for the library's users, for example, students can currently make ILL requests for articles for free, the library does not have much invoicing and activating these features is not a priority right now.

Conclusion

As can be seen in the workflow presentations, the Alma and Koha systems are not that different. Both provide the libraries with the possibility to take the basic steps from requesting material to returning it. The differences are in the details: for example, both systems connect to LIBRIS, but not to Subito, Get it now or RapidILL, and manual orders can be made directly in the system (Alma) or have to be entered in LIBRIS to be implemented (Koha).

At both these University Libraries, our aim is to achieve a balance of convenience, time efficiency and economical workflow for ILL. We consider the best possible solution for our customers, as well as for the ILL employees and the library's finances.

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